

WFO PADUCAH COOPERATIVE PROGRAM MANAGER RETIRES

by Deanna Lindstrom, HMT/COOP Program

On November 1, 1999, Bob Watson put away his tool belt, dumped his last bucket of antifreeze, fixed his last Fischer Porter rain gage and repaired his last Max/Min temperature system. He will never quality control another Fischer Porter tape. He won't have to battle wasps, colonies of ants, snakes, vicious dogs, or thorny bushes. As many of you are aware, Bob joined the ranks of the "RETIRED". I thought I would take time in this issue of "On The Horizon" to honor him with a few highlights from his illustrious career in the federal government.

Bob's career in federal service began on July 1, 1958 when he joined the U.S. Navy. He attended Weather Observer's School, Air Ocean's School, and Forecaster's School, all at Lakehurst NAS, NJ. He excelled very quickly into the forecaster ranks. During his tenure with the Navy, he broadened his knowledge of weather while gaining valuable experience traveling around the world. He held tours of duty on three aircraft carriers and staff duty on a Navy cruiser and an amphibious assault carrier. He also conducted flight briefings and issued en route forecasts from a staging base during Operation Deep Freeze in Christchurch, New Zealand. Bob retired from the Navy in 1980.

In November of 1981, he accepted a Meteorological Technician position with the National Weather Service (NWS). He took a brief break in 1982 and re-entered the NWS ranks again at the end of that year...and he never looked back. After being stationed at Cape Hatteras, NC and Marseilles, IL, he made his final move to a fledgling office in a town called Paducah, in the western corner of Kentucky. He was part of the "Original Trailer Crew" that opened the office in 1984. The office at that time consisted of a nine person staff who worked out of a double-wide trailer that was supposed to be temporary. (temporary, in this case, meant 10 1/2 years until the new modernized office opened its doors in 1995). During that time, Bob spun-up the upper air program. He also was the last Official In Charge (OIC) of WSO Paducah. During his tenure

as OIC, he was responsible for the groundbreaking ceremony for the new office. The smooth transition and all of the effort of his co-workers resulted in a Modernization Award for the 1994 fiscal year.

As the new Paducah office continued to spin-up during the 1996 season, Bob showed dedication by spending hundreds of hours of patience, dedication, and expertise in spinning up and maintaining our CPM program as co-program leader for a four state, fifty-eight county area. The teamwork between the observers, management staff, Bob, and myself has made it very successful over the last 3 1/2 years.

Bob's focus and dedication will now be spent doing a few "fun" things, like playing with his grandchildren, boating, and traveling. He will be missed by us all, but we wish him nothing but the best for the future.

NEW NOAA WEATHER RADIO TRANSMITTERS COMING SOON

by David Blanchard, Meteorologist Intern

More NOAA Weather Radio listeners in the region will have access to timely weather information very soon, with the start-up of two new 1000 watt radio transmitters.

The first one is the Madisonville-Hopkinsville transmitter WXJ-91, located near St. Charles, KY, with a tentative broadcast frequency of 162.525 megahertz. Kentucky Educational Television's radio tower and other equipment already exist but a transmitter and emergency power generator for the NWR system were added recently. WFO Paducah's audio program will reach the transmitter site via microwave link, thanks to the Kentucky Emergency Warning System (KEWS). Several delays have occurred due to parts manufacturers but the transmitter is expected to be up in December.

The second transmitter, WWG-48, located near Doniphan, Missouri, is expected to follow shortly thereafter, providing the Madisonville site is operational first. It will transmit on a frequency of 162.450 megahertz, and receive the audio program via microwave link also. The Doniphan site is also awaiting parts but the major equipment is in place. M&A Electric's tower and substation will be used for the antenna and power, respectively.

THE TRI-STATE TORNADO 75TH ANNIVERSARY PROJECT

by Ryan Presley, Meteorologist Intern

The clash of air masses along a frontal boundary often leads to the formation of clouds and sometimes precipitation. If enough instability and moisture are present, thunderstorms become a possibility. Then, if all the key ingredients come together at all levels of the atmosphere in just the right time and place, the most feared of all thunderstorm elements can develop—the killer tornado.

On a memorable day in the history of the Paducah Forecast Area, the atmosphere was primed for explosive thunderstorm development. No, this was not your ordinary day. Instead, it was a day that would go down in history—one that area residents would not soon forget. A day whose story would be passed down from one generation to the next. That particular day would come to be known as the day of the Great Tri-State Tornado. March 18, 1925—to be exact.

Early that afternoon, a severe thunderstorm formed over southeast Missouri. Eventually, a huge tornado—or “cyclone” as it was called back then—developed from the mature thunderstorm. At times, this tornado was virtually unrecognizable—by all accounts a huge black wall of debris that caught area farmers and other residents totally off-guard. How could they have known what was coming? After all, there was no organized warning system back then, and the storm was traveling at speeds over 60 mph, barreling across the landscape of southeast Missouri, southern Illinois, and southwest Indiana. In the aftermath, nearly 700 people had perished. Murphysboro, Illinois, alone, had over 230 fatalities, which is still considered the largest tornado disaster in U.S. history for a single community. In addition, thousands were injured and left homeless.

Over the next several months, the National Weather Service in Paducah will be working closely with local, state, and national agencies to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Great Tri-State Tornado. This commemoration will span across

many different mediums, ranging from a local commemoration event to the Year 2000's severe weather awareness campaigns, NOAA Weather Radio, and even the Internet.

Right now, the Paducah team is in the process of gathering information about the event—**and that's where we need your help.** If you, our listeners, have any information on the Tri-State Tornado, including newspaper articles, books, and photographs, or if you or someone you know lived through the event and have a story to tell, we would like to hear from you. You can contact us via several means. Give us a call at (270) 744-6440. If no one is available to take your call, just leave a brief message and we'll return your call as soon as possible. Or you can write us at: The National Weather Service, Attention: Tri-State Tornado, 8250 U.S. Highway 60, West Paducah, Kentucky 42086. If you're familiar with our web page, you can also drop an e-mail message to our Webmaster.

Of course, as the time draws near, continue to listen to NOAA Weather Radio, or log on to our website for more details on the commemoration event. We hope you'll join us in remembering the past to promote a safer tomorrow!

ANY SUGGESTIONS?

In an effort to avoid repetition and keep this publication as interesting and informative as possible, we strive to provide new and different information. This is difficult sometimes and ideas are limited. If you can think of anything that needs to be addressed or that would be helpful to you, please let us know.

Send your comments and/or suggestions to:

Jim Packett
National Weather Service
8250 U.S. Highway 60
West Paducah, KY 42086

Thank you.